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Front cover: Four figural sculptures sit at the base of the Capitol dome in Madison. These figures were created in the 1910s by a group of stonemasons following the designs of sculptor Karl Bitter. Work on the Capitol building, the third built in Madison after fire destroyed the second, was concluded in 1917. A celebration of the Capitol's centennial has been ongoing throughout 2017. WHI IMAGE ID 9570

Back cover: The statuary group Prosperity and Abundance stands above the Northwest Pavilion of the Capitol. Karl Bitter explained that the statues were not meant to be “an assemblage of art objects,” but “organic parts of the structure.” The groups, which have stood for over 100 years, underwent cleaning and repair during the Capitol restoration project from 1993 to 2001. KATHLEEN SITTER



Scott Walker
Office of the Governor

Fellow Wisconsinites,

We are working and winning for Wisconsin.

Since 2011, we have put in place bold, commonsense, conservative reforms to make our state a better place to live, work, and raise a family. The results are impressive.

More people are working today than ever before in our state's history. Unemployment rates in most counties are the lowest ever. And we are now a Top 10 state for business, up from 41st in 2010, according to Chief Executive Magazine.

Our tax reforms have put billions of dollars back in the hands of the hard-working taxpayers, and Wisconsin is a Top 10 state in reducing the overall tax burden over the previous five years. Our cumulative income tax reductions will save the typical Wisconsin family some \$1,500. That's real money.

We also put in place reforms that helped the government be a better steward of taxpayer money. We have reduced waste, fraud, and abuse in state government, and independent studies show our Act 10 reforms have saved schools and local and state government some \$5 billion.

Overall, our reforms brought us here to the point where we have a better budget outlook. It's what we call the Reform Dividend, and our priorities fall into three categories: Student Success, Accountable Government, and Rewarding Work. Our budget proposal includes major new investments and conservative reforms in each of these areas.

Wisconsin's future is bright, but we're not done yet. We are working and winning for Wisconsin.

It is my honor to serve as your governor. I hope the *Blue Book* is a useful resource for you to learn more about our state government.

Together, we are moving Wisconsin *Forward*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "S. Walker".

Scott Walker

INTRODUCTION

On March 8, 2017, legislative leaders and staff gathered in the Wisconsin Senate Parlor to receive the 2016 Kevin B. Harrington award for Excellence in Democracy Education. The award, presented by the National Conference of State Legislatures, is given to an individual or organization that furthers the understanding of the principles and practices of representative democracy. In presenting the award to the Wisconsin legislature, NCSL highlighted the many civics programs and activities of the Wisconsin legislature, but specifically mentioned one publication that exemplifies the award's values—the *Wisconsin Blue Book*.

The *Blue Book*, published since 1853, may be the oldest publication of the state. It was initially a manual for the Wisconsin State Assembly, a pocket-size volume, under 100 pages, for legislators to have quick access to information about state government. Over the decades, the *Blue Book* evolved in size, scope, and purpose. The *Blue Book's* many iterations were caused by the increased availability of information about state government and by the fact that its audience grew to include all state government and the public. By 2015, the *Blue Book* was almost 1,000 pages, filled with dense statistical information. It was an almanac of Wisconsin government.

The 2017 *Blue Book* marks the next iteration in its evolution. The new *Blue Book* is intended as an introduction to Wisconsin state and local government, but not necessarily as the primary source for this information. We live during a time of unparalleled access to information. More information about state government, and more timely information, can be accessed through the Internet than could ever be assembled in one volume by a team of researchers. The 2017 *Blue Book* recognizes this fact. The new *Blue Book* contains biographies of all legislators, descriptions of executive and judicial branch agencies, and vital statistics on Wisconsin government and elections. But it does not reproduce information that is dated or that can be obtained more easily and accurately elsewhere.

Those who have used the *Blue Book* will appreciate the continuity of the information in the 2017 edition. The topics covered are familiar and much of the statistical information is the same. But there are new discussions about the structure and operation of Wisconsin government, including essays on the legislature and the state budget, public education, and local government. Descriptions of government agencies are shorter than in past editions, but

readers are directed to Internet websites that contain a wealth of information. The key statistical tables are retained, but information peripheral to state and local government is not included. The *Blue Book* is a working document, intended as an introduction for the general public and students of politics to learn about Wisconsin.

The *Blue Book* is authored by Legislative Reference Bureau staff. New data was compiled, new tables assembled, new essays written, and material from past *Blue Books* was reorganized. It was a team undertaking in every way, best exemplified by the researching and writing of the feature article about women in the Wisconsin legislature. In the summer of 2016, LRB staff met with all women legislators, as well as past women legislators, to document their service in the legislature. Interviews were conducted in the capitol building, in legislative district offices, and even in private residences. Much was learned from the interviews and these lessons are captured in the article, “Knocking on the Door: Women in the Wisconsin Legislature.” The article documents women legislators’ campaigns for office, experiences in the legislature, and their challenges and successes. Every reader will appreciate the vital role that women have played in shaping and leading the modern Wisconsin legislature.

The *Blue Book* is a major undertaking that required LRB staff commitment, time, and leadership. Four employees deserve special recognition: Christopher Siciliano, Lauren Jackson, Nancy Warnecke, and Kira Langoussis Mochal. In addition to performing their other legislative duties, they led the project from start to finish. The information assembled in this volume, the visual design of the material, and the recognition of what is required of a hardbound publication in the Internet Age come from their efforts and vision. We are grateful for their contributions.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard A. Champagne". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Richard A. Champagne, Chief
Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Governor's letter iii

Introduction iv

1 Elected Officials

State executive officers 2

State supreme court justices 6

Congressional delegation 11

State legislature 19

2 Units of State Government

The Legislature 130

Overview 131

Apparatus for conducting business 133

How a bill becomes a law 139

Senate standing committees 146

Assembly standing committees 148

Joint legislative committees and commissions 153

Legislative service agencies 174

The Executive 181

Office of the Governor 181

Office of the Lieutenant Governor 190

Department of Administration 191

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection 198

Department of Children and Families 202

Department of Corrections 203

Educational Communications Board 205

Elections Commission 206

Department of Employee Trust Funds 206

Ethics Commission 208

Department of Financial Institutions 209

Department of Health Services 210
Higher Educational Aids Board 214
State Historical Society of Wisconsin 215
Office of the Commissioner of Insurance 218
State of Wisconsin Investment Board 220
Department of Justice 220
Department of Military Affairs 222
Department of Natural Resources 224
Office of the State Public Defender 230
Department of Public Instruction 230
Board of Commissioners of Public Lands 232
Public Service Commission 233
Department of Revenue 235
Department of Safety and Professional Services 237
Office of the Secretary of State 243
Office of the State Treasurer 244
Technical College System 244
Department of Tourism 246
Department of Transportation 249
University of Wisconsin System 251
Department of Veterans Affairs 257
Department of Workforce Development 259
Authorities 261
Nonprofit corporations 265
Regional planning commissions 266
Other regional entities 269
Interstate compacts 271

The Judiciary 280
Supreme court 280
Court of appeals 281
Circuit court 284
Municipal court 287
Auxiliary entities 288

3 About Wisconsin

- Knocking on the door: Women in the Wisconsin Legislature 298
- Elections 361
- Local government 385
- Public education 394
- The state budget 404
- Significant enactments of the 2015 Legislature 412
- Significant Wisconsin court decisions, June 2015–December 2016 424

4 Statistics and Reference

- The Wisconsin Constitution 454
- Wisconsin history prior to statehood 495
- State symbols 502

Election results 506

- Superintendent of public instruction 506
- Supreme court justices 508
- Court of appeals judges 512
- Circuit court judges 515
- State senators 518
- State representatives 520
- U.S. senators 526
- U.S. representatives 529
- Republican presidential primary 535
- Democratic presidential primary 538
- Republican National Convention delegates 539
- Democratic National Convention delegates 540
- U.S. president 542

Officials in government and politics 561

- State officers appointed by the governor 561
- Circuit court judges 574
- County officers 578
- Tribal chairpersons 584
- Political parties qualifying for ballot status as of June 2017 585

Population and political subdivisions 588

Wisconsin population since 1840 588

Wisconsin 2010 census by sex, race, and Hispanic origin 588

Basic data on counties 590

Population by county and municipality 591

Cities 609

Villages 613

Cities and villages over 10,000 621

Towns over 2,500 623

Historical lists 625

Governors 625

Elections for governor 626

Lieutenant governors 629

Attorneys general 630

Superintendents of public instruction 631

Secretaries of state 632

State treasurers 633

Supreme court justices 634

Senate presidents and assembly speakers 636

Majority and minority leaders, senate and assembly 638

Chief clerks and sergeants at arms, senate and assembly 639

Political composition of the legislature 641

Sessions of the legislature 643

Executive vetoes 647

Proposed constitutional amendments 648

Other statewide referenda 654

Elections for U.S. president 656

U.S. senators from Wisconsin 659

U.S. representatives from Wisconsin 659

Index 665

